

Whitecastle Community Council

Cyngor Cymuned Castellgwyn

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Minutes of the Council Meeting 15 February 2024

Present : Cllr. C. Lewis (Chair), Cllr. L. Hughes, Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons

In attendance : L. Taylor (Clerk), County Cllr. I. Chandler

Public Speaking : The chair welcomed a resident of Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern to the meeting and directed an item of correspondence to be reviewed before public speaking was allowed. The clerk reminded members of an email from One Voice Wales (OVW) which had been circulated. The email included the minutes of the Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership group meeting on 31 January. The minutes highlighted an environmental project in Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern run by Tom and Chloe Constable. Tom explained the history and aims of the project and how they are looking to work with local communities, businesses and schools. County Cllr. I. Chandler was aware of the project and was able to provide his insight into the project to members of the council. The Chair thanked Mr Constable and asked for the council to be informed of the progress of the project.

At the start of meeting the clerk asked for all resolutions to be proposed by the Chair and to be seconded by Cllr. L. Hughes. Any members not in favour of a resolution will be noted.

1. To accept apologies for absence.

Cllr. R. Edwards, Cllr. D. Edwards, Cllr. J. Biggs

2. To disclose personal and pecuniary interests in items listed below.

None. Members agreed to disclose any relevant interests should they be relevant to any discussions.

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 November 2023.

Resolved: The minutes from the full council meeting held on 16 November 2023 were read and approved.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

- Following the co-option of a Debbie Astill-Parsons to represent Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern ward the clerk informed MCC Electoral Services Office. She signed the Declaration of Acceptance form dated 16 November 2023.
- Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons met with the clerk and was provided with a range of support documentation and training information.

5. To consider the use of the council's website.

The clerk reminded members of items which had been added to the website since the last meeting and asked for comments. Residents had been made aware of an opportunity to

join the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum and a number of consultations and road closures. The clerk outlined the services provided by Severn Wye Energy Agency which aims to help residents manage their energy use. The agency is supported by Monmouthshire County Council.

6. To consider correspondence.

Members reviewed and discussed a range of correspondence.

- Access Improvement Grants are now available.
- Request for support from Hope Rescue.
- Audit Wales Newsletter.
- Appeal - Cronfa Cyfle i Bawb Yr Urdd Fund for All.
- AT Creative - Interactive self-guided tours for villages, towns and communities.
- 'D-Day 80' - 6 June 2024 – members noted this event.
- Monmouthshire Citizens Advice Impact Report Q3.
- Newsletter from the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC). Members were informed of an opportunity for the council to sign a Civility and Respect Pledge. The Chair proposed signing the pledge to reduce the impact of bullying, harassment and intimidation.
Resolved: To sign the Civility and Respect Pledge
- An opportunity has arisen for community councils to acquire (free of charge) a portrait of King Charles. Members recommended applying to the scheme.

Monmouthshire County Council (MCC)

- Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Autumn Newsletter 2023
- Local Transport Plan Consultation. Members were concerned of the lack of public transport in the area. County Cllr. I. Chandler reminded members of the Grass Routes service.
- Electoral Register 2023/24 received and councillors informed.
- MCC's MonLife department hosted a Christmas Celebration for valued volunteers.
- Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Grant funding available to kickstart community food-growing projects
- Dog fouling meeting 22 February.
- MCC Budget meeting Monday 5 February
- Monmouthshire LNP requested feedback on the Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan Part 1.
- Invitation by Gwent Music to MCC Chair's Charity Music Showcase on Tuesday 12 March at 7pm at Monmouth Comprehensive School.

One Voice Wales (OVW)

- Local Government Services Pay Agreement . New rates for council employees from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. Community Council Annual payment report. The Panel proposes that, rather than name individual councillors, it would be sufficient to simply list the total amounts paid and the total number of recipients of the mandatory payment for working from home, the flat rate consumables allowance and travel and subsistence claims.
- Cost-of-Living survey of Community and Town Council activity in Wales. Completed by the clerk.
- Countryside Code update December 2023
- Examples of Biodiversity actions asked for.
- One Voice Wales Monmouthshire/Newport Committee Meeting
- Digital training opportunities.
- Online Event - Buglife Cymru and new resources.

- Joint Event One with Voice Wales And Planning Aid Wales on 7 March to explain how Strategic Development Plans will impact communities in terms of future sustainable development.
- News Bulletin - One Voice Wales National Awards Conference 2024 on 27 March at the Royal Welsh Showground
- Pethau Bychain group meeting on 27 February
- Event invitation to 'Community Assets: Policy and Practice in Wales - what's next?'

Welsh Government

- The Future Generations Commissioner launched Cymru Can, his new seven-year strategy for a better today and tomorrow in Cymru.
- A Fairer Council Tax Consultation.
- Future spending purposes for dormant assets funding in Wales.
- Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru are looking for non Exec Director Board members.
- Report 'Access denied – Older people's experiences of digital exclusion in Wales'.
- The National Forest for Wales. Information on a new round of funding, which is opening on 21 February, closing on 8 May.

7. Councillor reports

Cllr. Astill-Parsons reported a meeting with a Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern resident to discuss the use of the island of land by the roadside at The Onen. The removal of the disused bus shelter and the old noticeboard were considered. Local residents were consulted and MCC contacted about permission to make changes and a quotation for the work involved. The cost of a double board is £1,608.62 and its installation and removal of the shelter will cost £750 making a total of £2,358.62. Members were concerned at the cost of the project and were given information about the cost of a smaller board. The total costs using a smaller board would be £1,881.92. Members discussed the use of community council noticeboards and agreed that a smaller board would be suitable for both council and community use. The Chair asked for approval for going ahead with the project on the basis of the lower cost. Cllr. Astill-Parsons offered to inform the Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern resident. **Resolved:** To go ahead with the installation of a smaller board and to remove the shelter.

8. County Councillor's report

Monmouthshire County Council is in the process of deciding its budget for 2024/25. This will contain cuts in many of its services. Residents have been given the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Pressures from areas such as social care will mean it is going to be a difficult year for the council to control its budget. Cllr. Chandler informed the council of a letter which will be shortly circulated to community councils about an initiative he is leading to making Monmouthshire becoming an Age-Friendly County.

9. Training and professional development

- The clerk asked members to consider two documents which had already been circulated. Firstly, a Job Description for the clerk and secondly a Staff Support, Appraisal and Performance policy. The Chair asked for members to approve the two documents. **Resolved:** Members agreed to adopt the policy and the job description.
- A meeting was held on 26 January to complete the annual review of the performance of the clerk. Cllr. Lewis (Chair) and Cllr. Hughes were present. The clerk completed appendix A of the staff Support, Appraisal and Performance policy to present his views and asked the Chair to complete appendix B. Appendix B was read out to members and the Chair asked members to accept the report and the clerk to sign the document. **Resolved:** To accept the outcomes of the appraisal.

- The clerk reported he had attended an online course on how to support people with limited digital skills. He aims to attend a course in March about community engagement through the use of IT, Websites and Social Media
- Cllr. D. Astill-Parsons reported she attended a One Voice Wales course entitled 'Introduction for new councillors' and will be attending additional courses in Code of Conduct and planning in the near future.
- Monmouth Town Council have offered members a course run by Stonewall regarding LGBTQ+inclusivity to be held on 26 February at the Shire Hall, Monmouth.
- The clerk asked the council to approve a new system for booking training courses. The new system would require the council to approve an amendment to the council's Financial Regulations which will allow the clerk to liaise with the Chair to approve training costs in situations when there is a need to do so. The clerk reminded members that the budget for training 2024/25 is £500.

Resolved: To amend and review the council's Financial Regulations at the Annual General Meeting to enable the above system to be implemented.

The member of the public left the meeting before the rest of the agenda was discussed.

10. To consider planning matters.

Review of previous applications

DM/2023/01242 7 September 2023 Planning Permission The construction of a workshop and machinery storage and associated development Llan Farm The Hendre NP25 5NX
This application was considered by MCC planning committee on 10 January. The planning officer recommended approval and members of the planning committee agreed

DM/2023/00711 14 June 2023 Reconsultation 26 September Planning Permission Re-open existing gateway. Treetops Talycoed Road Llantilio Crossenny NP7 8TL
This application was considered by MCC planning committee on 10 January. The planning officer recommended approval and members of the planning committee agreed.

DM/2023/00569 – The delegated panel of the planning committee recommended approval of the application with five conditions. These included the removal of previous condition 3 'the existing house known as Cwm Newydd shall not be sold or otherwise disposed of separately to the farm buildings'.

DM/2023/01481 25 October 2023 Planning Permission Creation of a golf driving range to include construction of a new single-storey building to contain practice and teaching bays. The Rolls Of Monmouth Golf Club B4233 The Hendre The Hendre NP25 5HG.
This application was approved with conditions which included no lighting or lighting fixtures to be attached to or be positioned in the curtilage so as to illuminate the driving range or building.

DM/2022/01556 Planning Permission for an additional building to be built separate and below the sight line of the listed building. Monmouth Montessori Nursery Llangattock Vibon Avel NP25 5NG
This application is pending consideration.

DM/2023/00373 The development is to construct a new cubicle shed and housing for new robots to complete milking exercise. Whitehall Farm Whitehill Lane Rockfield NP25 5NH.
This application has been approved.

Current Applications

DM/2023/01769 8 February 2024 Planning Permission Conversion of modern barn to community use with office and podcast recording area. Installation of 3no. wooden glamping cabins and car parking area. Grange Farm Upper House Lane Llantilio Crossenny NP25 5HW.

Members of the council were supportive of this application and were informed that any issues concerning public rights of way had been considered by the applicant and were known by the planning officer. Members recommended approval.

- The council had been informed by Planning Wales of changes to the planning system which include the introduction of Strategic Development Plans. Online courses to explain the changes have been scheduled for late February.
- Members expressed their concern as to the way in which retrospective applications are considered by planning officers.

11. To consider financial matters.

- The clerk presented financial statements up to 31 January 2024 with a commentary on relevant points. The statements consisted of a bank reconciliation, a balance sheet and an actual spend versus budget analysis. The financial statements were accepted by members and signed by the Chair in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations.
- A direct debit had been set up for HMRC Employers' PAYE and the first payment had been made on 22 January for £81.29.
- A VAT claim for 2023 was made in early January and a payment for £445.11 was received on 26 January.
- The clerk asked members to approve the appointment of Cath Williams as the internal auditor for 23/24.

Resolved: To appoint Cath Williams as the internal auditor of the council's accounts for 2023/24

- The Chair presented the following payments for approval along with the relevant invoices and documentation and asked members to approve the payments.

Resolved: To approve the payments and recommendations for donations to community groups.

Payments for approval

L Taylor	Secretarial duties November 2023 plus expenses	£351.50
L Taylor	Secretarial duties December 2023 plus expenses	£352.60
L Taylor	Secretarial duties January 2024 plus expenses	£367.70
Cllr Lauren Hughes	Batteries for Llantilio defibrillator	£52.74
Air Ambulance	Donation to support its work for the community	£250
Gwent YFC	Donation to support its work for the community	£250
Llantilio Crossenny Church (St Teilo)	Donation community bench/churchyard maintenance	£1000
Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern Church	Donation to support its work for the community	£1000
Penrhos Church (St Cadoc)	Churchyard maintenance	£250
Rockfield Church (St Cenhedlon)	Churchyard maintenance	£250
St Maughan's Church (St Cadoc)	Churchyard maintenance x 2	£500
The Village Life Community Project	Donation to support its work for the community	£250
Vision ICT	Website hosting and support 3/24 – 2/25	£240
Audit Wales	Llantilio Crossenny CC Audit Fees 2019/20	£200
Audit Wales	Llantilio Crossenny CC Audit Fees 2020/21	£200
SLCC	Clerk Membership Fee	£120

- Council Tax Precept Advice Notification 2024/2025 for £17,376 was sent to MCC on 31 December. The council would prefer one annual payment on the last working day in April rather than three payments throughout the year.
- Members were informed of advice from One Voice Wales regarding a pay increase for employees of the council for 2023/24. This would mean the clerk is paid on SCP 17 £14.95

an hour. This an increase of £1 an hour which is backdated from April 2023 to January 2024. The chair asked members to accept this pay increase and to pay back pay as part of the February payment.

Resolved: To approve and implement the NALC flat rate pay increase, pro-rated, based on the clerk's current contract of 30 hours per month.

12. Community groups

- Cllr. Hughes provided an update on a meeting held on 12 January with Tom Pitts-Tucker and Linda Green from the Village Life Community Project, outlining the group's efforts in supporting local residents. The group currently manages five defibrillators across several areas and proposed extending support to all ten defibrillator units in the community council area. Tom Pitts-Tucker later expressed agreement with a more coordinated approach under the council's guidance to ensure reliable management of defibrillators in the future. Council members supported this idea and tasked the clerk and Cllr. Hughes with further exploring the initiative.
- Gwent YFC have agreed to provide information for the council's website. The council has asked that Gwent YFC members are made aware of the support of the Community Council in any official document, communication or social media.

13. To consider highways matters.

- The county council is looking for new members for the Monmouthshire Local Access Forum. The forum will enable members of the public to support the work of the countryside team.
- On 12 January, the county council informed the community council of an extensive series of bridge and footpath closures. On 12 February a complaint was received by the community council about footpath 91 from Llanvapley goes over the Trothy to White Castle. The MCC Rights of Way Enforcement Officer indicated that the county council does not have a time scale for the repair of the bridges. Members are aware of a bridge on Offas Dyke National Trail adjacent to White Castle which has been out of action for some considerable time despite this being a priority. Cllr. Chandler agreed to speak to officers to find out why no progress can be made.
- Following a complaint from a resident about the condition of the road from Llantilio Crossenny to Llanarth, the council has been informed that carriageway resurfacing will not to go ahead at the moment.
- Following from a complaint from a resident, the council asked the county council to change speed limit signs in the Hendre. County Cllr. I. Chandler explained that the change is intended to be implemented when a new order is published in May.
- A complaint raised by Cllr. J. Biggs about potholes at Pontyllan, Penrhos Road was reported to the highways department and the potholes have been made safe. There has been no report about the problems reported at Llaca-Du in Penrhos.
- A resident of Llantilio Crossenny has made a complaint about the poor condition of the roads in Llantilio Crossenny village. The resident was informed that work is scheduled for April 2024.

14. To discuss churchyard matters.

- Members were asked to accept a quotation from MCC for grass cutting in 2024 at Llangatock Vibon Avel Churchyard for four cuts: £607.75 and Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern Churchyard for 3 cuts: £298.57. This schedule has been checked with church committees and there is some uncertainty about the need for another cut at Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern which is being clarified.
Resolved: To accept the quotation and any minor changes.
- The clerk reminded members of the need to consider fouling signs, bins and bags once the new Public Spaces Protection Order (Dog Fouling) comes into force in April.

- On 28 January Cllr. Astill-Parsons and the clerk met with members of Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern church committee and a contractor to discuss the planned upgrade to the footpaths. Several ideas were put forward and the church committee is making changes and will ensure the community council is in agreement with its final proposals.
- The council received an enquiry from Canada from a lady who is seeking to trace relatives who may be buried in Llanvihangel Ystern Llewern churchyard.
- The clerk informed members of the need to update information about the Llangattock Vibon Avel Churchyard on the church noticeboard and will keep members informed of progress. Friends of Friendless Churches are responsible for the church and the church noticeboard which is in the porch.

15. To consider policing matters.

No matters were raised by members and monthly reports were acknowledged.

16. Any other business

Cllr. C. Lewis proposed an additional council on meeting on Thursday 11 April. Members agreed on the need for the meeting.

Resolved: The date of the next meeting is 11 April 2024.

Meeting closed at 9.26pm